

VZCZCXRO9792  
PP RUEHSL  
DE RUEHBS #0231 0571508  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
P 261508Z FEB 10 ZDK  
FM AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0059  
INFO RUEHZJ/HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
RUEHUB/USINT HAVANA PRIORITY 0016  
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA PRIORITY 1128  
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 0325

C O N F I D E N T I A L BRUSSELS 000231

SIPDIS

STATE FOR EUR/WE, EUR/ERA, AND IO/HR:GPATEL

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/25/2020

TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [BE](#)

SUBJECT: BELGIUM SUPPORTS MOST U.S. POSITIONS IN 13TH UNHRC  
SESSION

REF: STATE 16236

Classified By: Acting Polec Counselor Robert Kiene for reasons 1.4(b) and (d)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: Lieke Biesemans, attach for human rights at the Belgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, welcomes U.S. engagement in the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) and views the U.S. as a like-minded ally. Although in complete agreement with U.S. resolutions proposed for Guinea, DRC, DPRK and Burma, Belgium has slight differences in approach regarding the rest, according to Biesemans. She said that Belgium would support the action plan on racial and religious intolerance, but needs closer coordination and an opportunity to comment on the resolution in order to help. She said Belgium will abstain on the vote on the Goldstone report. It would like the debate on the report to stay in Geneva, but she doubts it will be possible. Belgium plans to expend much energy keeping Iran off the HRC, and would support a carefully crafted resolution on Iran, Biesemans explained. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) On February 24, poloff and polintern delivered reftel demarche to Lieke Biesemans, attach for human rights at the Belgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA). Biesemans apologized for her "frankness" as she addressed each of the six demarche points, but she welcomed U.S. re-engagement in the HRC and views the U.S. as a like-minded ally.

¶3. (C) Concerning racial and religious tolerance, Biesemans said Belgium supports the action-oriented approach acknowledging the concerns of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) and African Group about anti-Muslim discrimination. However, she stated that Belgium would likely oppose any legally binding resolution proposed by the OIC or the Ad Hoc Committee on Complementary Standards. To better help the U.S., she requested that Belgium be informed of any consultations with other blocs or countries, especially South Africa, and would welcome the opportunity to comment early on any texts of resolutions being proposed.

¶4. (C) On Guinea, Biesemans said Belgium supports all efforts to secure a resolution addressing the human rights situation there.

¶5. (C) Belgium supports the renewal and strengthening of the special procedures mandate for the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) in principle, but its position has not yet been formally confirmed or announced.

¶6. (C) According to Biesemans, Belgium will abstain in the upcoming United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) vote on the Palestinian-drafted resolution based on the Goldstone Report. She said that the Belgian delegation in Geneva has explained its reasons for abstention to the U.S. mission there.

Although Belgium would like to keep the Goldstone report in the HRC, the fact that the U.S. and Belgium and other like-minded countries are in a minority on the Council makes this unlikely.

17. (C) Biesemans said Belgium supports the USG's efforts to highlight human rights abuses in Iran through the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC), but only with a carefully planned, "surgical" approach. She said such an approach is necessary because Belgium and the U.S. will only get "one shot" at this. Belgium does not support Iran's candidacy for a seat on the UNHRC. The GOB believes Iranian membership would devalue the HRC, and it will spend significant resources to oppose it, she said.

18. (C) Belgium fully supports EU efforts to renew the special procedures mandates for DPRK and Burma.

19. (C) Belgium is working with Mexico to support a recurring Mexican resolution on countering terrorism within a human rights framework.

GUTMAN

.